FAQs on Decolonization of Africa

Q 1. What caused the Decolonization of Africa?

- World War II led to the Decolonization of Africa by affecting both Europe and Africa militarily, psychologically, politically, and economically. The war helped build strong African nationalism.
- Oppositions from the new super powers, the U.S and the Soviet Union, both of which had taken positions against colonialism.
- Lack of wealth and political support necessary to suppress faraway revolts which was as a result of the WWI

Q 2. When did the Decolonization of Africa start?

The Decolonization of Africa began between 1945 and 1975.

Q 3. What were the main reasons for the Decolonization of Africa?

Consequent to the ravages of the war, European powers could not afford the resources needed to maintain their African colonies. They also lacked the wealth and political support needed to suppress revolts. Further, they faced opposition from the new superpowers, the U.S. and the Soviet Union, both of which had been opposing colonialism.

Q 4. Was the Decolonization of Africa easy?

No, it was not. The Decolonization of Africa was often marred with violence, political turmoil, unrest, and revolts. Although most African countries were rich in cash crops and minerals, they could not process these goods themselves.

FEATURES OF PROTO-NATIONALISM

Definition of Nationalism

Nationalism can be described as the African’s quest to free his country from the influence and domination of colonial rule and to become an independent state. Nationalism is classified into two; Proto-nationalism and Modern-nationalism.

Proto-nationalism refers to the activities geared toward inclusiveness in the administration of the colonies before the commencement of the Second World War.

Modern-nationalism on the other hand refers to the quest, after the Second World War, for the absolute removal of colonial rule and the granting of independence.

FEATURES OF PROTO-NATIONALIST MOVEMENT

Leadership

One of the features of the Proto-nationalist movement was that its leadership was not limited to any one party. It was led by a host of them. This included the National Congress of British West Africa and the Aborigines Rights Protection Society.

It was non-violent

Another feature of the Proto-nationalist movement was that it adopted non-violent approach to its agitation. It used the structures and channels that were available, at the time, to push for its demands. For example, they sent petitions to the Secretary of State for the Colonies who resided in London to press home for the withdrawal of the Land Bill of 1897.

No demand for independence

The Proto-nationalists did not demand for the independence of their respective countries, rather they were interested in the improvement of their lot under colonial administration. For example, they demanded for the representation of Africans in the executive Council since there were none. They also demanded for the increment in the number of Africans in the legislative Council.

It was urban based

The membership of the Proto-nationalist movement was limited to the urban areas of the various colonies. They did not extend to the rural areas. For example, in the Gold Coast, the activities of the proto-nationalists were limited to Accra, Cape Coast and Sekondi-Takoradi. In Nigeria, it was mainly in Lagos and a few cities.

Membership

The membership of the Proto-nationalists was mainly the educated professionals like lawyers, teachers and journalists. There were also some business men who joined them in pushing for their goals. One can conclude that it was elitist in character.

Excluded chiefs

Another feature of Proto-nationalism was that the traditional chiefs did not play any role. They were conspicuously absent. This was so because the chiefs were also engaged in the implementation of Indirect Rule and therefore did not see the need to joint in the fight against their own masters.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS

1. What is Proto-nationalism? [2 marks]

   b. Highlight five features of Proto-nationalism. [10 marks]

2. Explain six characteristics of the nationalist activities that were practiced before the Second World War. [12 marks]

FACTORS THAT PROMOTED MODERN NATIONALISM IN BRITISH WEST AFRICA

The independence of countries in Asia

After the Second World War, some countries in Asia attained their independence. Such countries like India, Parkistan and Burma were granted independence by the British soon after the Second World War. This increased the agitation in British West Africa that they could be granted independence if they fought harder.

Rise of the Labour Party to power in Britain

In the 1945 general elections in Britain, the Labour Party won the majority seats in Parliament and therefore formed the government of the day. The Labour Party, in collaboration with the liberal minds in British felt there was the need to decolonize the overseas territories. This also increased the agitation for independence.

Change in African perception

In the Second World War, the British were defeated by the Japanese. This destroyed the invincibility surrounding the British in the eyes of the Africans. In the battles themselves, the African who were conscripted into the British army to help in the war efforts, realized on the battlefields that the British were human after all. This broke the aura around them and pushed agitation for independence.

Return of the ex-service men

The Africans who were conscripted into the British army to fight the battles alongside their British counterparts were promised a form of pension after they were discharged from active service. However, the resettlement package which was promised was not forthcoming. This forced the ex-service men to join in the nationalist activities.

The Press

After the Second World War, there was a proliferation of newspapers in West Africa. There were newspapers like the Evening Press, the Talking Drum, the West African Pilot and the Guardian, to mention but a few. The articles that were churned out in these newspapers aided, in no small way, to the agitation for independence.

Exclusion of Africans from the economy

It was realized that the people who had taken the commanding heights of the economy of West Africa were Europeans, Indians and Lebanese. This was to the detriment of the Africans. They were especially incensed by the fact that, even the retail trade, which should have been reserved for the Africans were also taken over by the Indians and the Lebanese especially.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS

1. Highlight six factors that promoted the activities of modern nationalism in British West Africa.

FACTORS THAT PROMOTED PROTO-NATIONALIST ACTIVITIES IN WEST AFRICA BEFORE THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Exclusion of Africans from economic activities

One of the factors that promoted nationalist activities before the Second World War was that the Africans were excluded from the economic

activities of the time. For example, the import and export business was controlled by the Europeans, Syrian and the Lebanese. The retail sector, which should have been left for the Africans, was also taken over by the same foreign elements.

The role of ex-slaves

After the end of the slave trade, some of the slaves returned to West Africa to settle. These slaves who came from Britain saw how those places were governed and there felt that there was the need for the Africans to be involved in the way they are governed on their own land and in their own country.

The role of the educated elite

The educated elite felt that with their level of education, they have been given some roles to play in the governance of their country but this was not so. They were excluded from governance both at the central government and the local level. One of the ways of solving this was the formation of the nationalist movements of the time.

Unemployment

The Western system of education brought in its wake a large team of school graduates who did not have any form of employment. This category people thought they should have been given some form of employment in the Civil and Public Service but his was not the case. This group also had to join the nationalist movement to push pressure on the colonialists.

Discrimination in the Public service

The few African who found employment in the Public Service realized that they were being discriminated against. The Africans realized that they were being employed in the lower strata of the service though they may have the same qualifications as their European counterparts. This also contributed to the rise of nationalism.

Opposition to Ordinances

The introduction of the 1897 land Bills which sort to disposes the indigenes of their fertile lands, or so it was suspected, elicited a strong opposition from the local people. The locals also opposed the waterworks Bill of 1934 because it was seen as an obnoxious law. The opposition to these laws and others also formed the bases of proto - nationalism.

SAMPLE QUESTION(S)

1. a.What is Proto-nationalism? [3 marks]

b. Explain six factors that gave rise to the agitations between 1919 and 1939.

THE EFFECTS OF RADICAL NATIONALISM IN BRITISH WEST AFRICA

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THE IMPACT

Emergence of political parties

One of the effects of the activities of modern nationalism is that it led to the emergence of political parties in the West African sub-region. The political parties became the tools which were used to drive home the demand for reforms in the colonial system and later the agitation for independence.

It led to constitutional reforms

Another effect of the militant agitations after the Second World War was that many constitutional reforms were introduced in West Africa by the colonial powers. The elective principle, which was first introduced in 1925, was extended to Kumasi under the 1946 Burns constitution. In that same constitution, an African majority was introduced into the Legislative Council.

Increased social amenities

The agitations after the Second World War by the modern nationalists led to the increased provision of the social amenities that were needed in the colonies. New educational facilities were built, including the then University

College of the Gold Coast. The road network was increased and hospitals were also constructed.

Self-government

The modern nationalists' activities after the Second World War led to the attainment of independence, at various points, in the various colonies.

It broke the myth around the white man

Up until the Second World War, the black Africans held their white counterparts in a very high esteem. When the black men were recruited to fight alongside the British soldiers, they realized that the white man was human after all. The white men were frightened on the battlefield like any normal human being. The blacks did not therefore see why the white man should continue to be in the helm of affairs.

More Africans in colonial administration

With the piled up pressure to Africanize colonial administration, more and more Africans were appointed to play a major role in colonial administration. In the 1946 Burns constitutions, more Africans were introduced into the Legislative Council. Also more and more Africans were appointed to the upper echelons of the African Civil Service.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS

1. a. Explain the term 'modern nationalist"? [3 marks]

   b. Explain six reasons why nationalist activities were aggressive after the Second World War. [12 marks]